



## Idiomatic Phrases among Banten Sundanese Local Language Speakers: An Exploratory Case Study

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### **Abstract**

#### **Purpose**

*There have been many studies on local languages in Indonesia. However, the study that focuses on Banten Sundanese Language, henceforth is BSL, seems to have not been widely studied, especially its idiomatic phrases. To reach the gaps, this present study aims to explore in-depth investigations about (1) the form of idiomatic phrases in BSL; (2) the use of idiomatic phrases among BSL speakers; and (3) the efforts to preserve the idiomatic phrases in BSL.*

#### **Method**

*To solve the problems, Pandeglang Regency in Banten Province was selected as the locus, and it involved 27 informants who were justified and snowballed. The method used in this research was a case study, with observation, interviews, and documentation as data collecting techniques.*

#### **Results/findings**

*The findings show there are 94 idiomatic phrases in BSL, and most of the informants (63%) claim that the phrases are limited in use .*

#### **Conclusion**

*It concludes that real works are emerged in collecting and preserving the BSL phrases through: (a) using BSL as a colloquial language; (b) applying BSL as a compulsory course at both primary and secondary schools; (3) encouraging the regulations to rule the use of BSL among the speakers; (4) publishing BSL dictionary and other literatures; and (5) controlling the use of gadgets, smartphones, and other technological media for the children.*

#### **Keywords**

*Banten Sundanese language, idiomatic phrases, Indonesian local language*

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### Abstrak

#### Tujuan

Penyelidikan terhadap bahasa-bahasa lokal di Indonesia sebetulnya sudah banyak dilakukan. Namun, kajian yang fokus membahas Bahasa Sunda Banten, atau disingkat BSB, nampaknya belum banyak dikaji, terutama terkait dengan frasa idiomatis yang ada di dalam BSB. Untuk menjembatani keterbatasan di atas, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali informasi yang mendalam mengenai: (1) bentuk frasa idiomatis dalam BSB; (2) penggunaan frasa idiomatis dalam BSB; dan (3) upaya yang dapat dilakukan untuk melestarikan frasa idiomatis dalam BSB.

#### Metode

Untuk menjawab ketiga masalah di atas, Kabupaten Pandeglang dipilih sebagai lokasi dalam riset ini, dengan melibatkan sebanyak 27 informan yang dipilih secara justifikasi dan snowball. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini yaitu studi kasus, dengan observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi sebagai teknik pengumpulan datanya.

#### Temuan

Berdasarkan data yang digali dari para informan, diperoleh temuan bahwa ada 94 frasa idiomatis sebagai bagian dari vokabuler BSB, dan sebagian besar informan (63%) menyatakan bahwa frasa-frasa tersebut sudah jarang digunakan dalam tuturan sehari-hari.

#### Kesimpulan

Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa perlu segera dilakukan upaya konkret agar frasa idiomatis BSB dapat terus lestari melalui: (a) pembiasaan berbahasa Sunda Banten di lingkungan rumah dan masyarakat, (b) dibuatnya regulasi yang mengatur penggunaan BSB, (c) diterbitkannya kamus BSB, (d) menjadikan BSB sebagai mata pelajaran wajib di sekolah dan universitas, dan (e) pembatasan penggunaan telepon pintar atau gawai lainnya.

#### Kata kunci:

Bahasa Sunda Banten, bahasa lokal Indonesia, frasa idiomatis

### المخلص

#### الهدف

في الواقع، تم إجراء العديد من التحقيقات في اللغات المحلية في إندونيسيا. ومع ذلك، يبدو أن الدراسات التي تركز على مناقشة اللغة السونداوية في بانتين (BSB) لم يتم دراستها كثيرًا، خاصة فيما يتعلق بالعبارات الاصطلاحية في BSB. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف معلومات متعمقة بشأن: (1) أشكال العبارات الاصطلاحية في BSB؛ (2) استخدام العبارات الاصطلاحية في BSB؛ و (3) الجهود التي يمكن بذلها للحفاظ على العبارات الاصطلاحية في BSB.

#### الطريقة

و اختارت هذه الدراسة منطقة باندغلانج كموقع البحث بمشاركة 27 مخبرًا تم اختيارهم عن طريق التبرير وكرة الثلج. أما الطريقة المستخدمة في هذا البحث فهي دراسة حالة، مع الملاحظة والمقابلات والتوثيق كتقنيات لجمع البيانات.

#### النتائج

بناءً على البيانات التي تم جمعها من المخبرين، وجد أن هناك 94 عبارة اصطلاحية كجزء من مفردات BSB، وذكر معظم المخبرين (63%) أن هذه العبارات نادرًا ما تستخدم في الحديث اليومي.

#### الخلاصة

خلصت هذه الدراسة إلى ضرورة بذل جهود ملموسة على الفور حتى تستمر العبارات الاصطلاحية في BSB من خلال: (أ) تعويد لغة سوندا بانتين في البيئة المنزلية والمجتمعية، (ب) وضع اللوائح التي تحكم استخدام BSB، (ج) نشر قاموس BSB، (د) جعل BSB مادة إلزامية في المدارس والجامعات، و (هـ) الحد من استخدام الهواتف الذكية أو الأجهزة الأخرى.

#### الكلمات الرئيسية

سوندا بانتين، اللغة المحلية الإندونيسية، عبارة اصطلاحية

## INTRODUCTION

As an object of research, language has never run out to be investigated since it is closely related to every aspect of human life. Language research is not only related to the internal aspects of language (micro-linguistics), i.e. phonology, morphology, and semantics, but also to how the external aspects relate to the language (macro-linguistics), i.e. sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and forensic linguistics. Language is an essential medium of communication that appears in every area of social interaction. As a medium in every single human activity, language seems also to be influenced by its situational and social entity; as the linguistics sub-disciplines majoring the issue here is sociolinguistics.

Sociolinguistics is an interdisciplinary field that relates language to every social situation behind it. The use of language among the speakers is one of the primary discussions in sociolinguistics. The use of language is closely related to the selection of the language used in a particular domain. The speech community in Indonesia, for instance, is accustomed to being bilingual or multilingual. It is common among Indonesians to use the Indonesian Language as a medium of instruction (formal language) and the local language as their mother tongue.

The recent facts show the use of the Indonesian Language gets more vitality. Unfortunately, this seems contradictory for some of the local languages. It is declared by Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa (Language Development and Fostering Agency), Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Republic of Indonesia) that the numbers of local languages have decreased from year to year. By the 1970s, there were around 918 local languages in Indonesia; it had shrunk to 718 languages in the 2000s (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2022). Since this is not immediately inventoried and preserved, the local languages may be threatened, shrink, and even extinct. This is also doubled with the lack of investigation from researchers, universities, and other related institutions.

The situation is also possible to happen in Banten Sundanese Language, henceforth is BSL. This local language is commonly used among speakers in Pandeglang, Lebak, and partly in Serang Districts. These districts are located in Banten Province, Indonesia. Although the language has high vitality for both quantity of speakers and quality of speech, the prior investigation found some linguistic units that are reducing in use. Some of them are even nearly extinct. This unit refers to what is called as an idiomatic phrase. The preliminary investigation verifies that some BSL phrases are limited in use; they only used among the elderly. The BSL idiomatic phrase *awak sampayan*, for example, has an idiomatic meaning *to deserve to wear any clothes*, or *celi kékéncéng* which means *difficulties to understand anything*. Literally, the phrases consecutively mean *clothesline* and *pan handles*. These two phrases are now limited to use by the teenagers.

The investigations in collecting, maintaining, and preserving local languages in Indonesia have been carried out by the previous scholars. These can be studied from the results by (Candrasari et al., 2018); (Farisiyah & Zamzani, 2018); (Gusnawaty et al., 2017); (Lestariningsih, 2017); (Ningsih et al., 2021); (Nirmala, 2017); (Septiana et al., 2020); (Syahriyani, 2017); (Tarigan & Sofyan, 2018); (Ulfa et al, 2018); and (Zen, 2021). All of their works focused on discussing the sociolinguistics issues of local languages in Indonesia; how the local languages may survive, shift, maintain, and the like. In the meantime, the study for the BSL shows inadequacy, especially the investigation for its linguistic unit of idiomatic phrases. It should bear in mind that the use and preservation of local languages in the Indonesian context is an important issue for various reasons. The existence of local languages is recognized as national treasures since these represent the diversity of both Indonesian culture and languages. Therefore, the investigations of local languages are considered essential since the shrinkage may happen among those languages.

The use of language among speech communities is closely related to an issue of language vitality. This refers to the use of language in a variety of ways and contexts with its

rich collections of vocabularies and phrases. Language vitality refers to the condition in which a language is still used by its speech community for various functions (Meyerhoff, 2006). A language is considered to have vitality if it is used as a medium to connect among the community (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). It is also stated that vitality refers to the ability of a language to accommodate and perform various functions and purposes (Candrasari & Nurmaida, 2018). In Indonesia, the local languages perform various vitalities. Safe is shown by the Javanese and Sundanese Languages, for example. Threats occurred to the Saleman and Yalahatan Languages in Maluku Province. Nearly extinct or extinct afflicts the Tandia and Mawes Languages in Papua Province.

The vitality of a language, moreover, can be seen from its use and usage. The use is classified into five domains (1) family, (2) friendship, (3) religion, (4) education, and (5) work; the usage is classified into (1) universal usage, (2) multilingual usage, (3) shrinking/reducing, (4) limited usage, (5) very limited usage, and (6) extinction (Wibowo, 2016). Various factors can contribute to language vitality. These may come from the external conditions, i.e. social and political situations, and the internal conditions, i.e. the number of speakers, vocabularies, and phrases (Meyerhoff, 2006). It is noticed that the number of vocabularies and phrases become significant issues in preserving a language. It is in line since this present work intends to collect and preserve the idiomatic phrase of the BSL.

As a linguistic unit, idiomatic phrases are different from any other syntactic fixed-expressions. These refer to a group of words that result in new meaning, so they cannot be comprehended literally. It is argued that idiomatic phrases cannot be understood literally since they convey new meanings, and they are also not allowing variations in their use (Ammer, 2013) and (Fellbaum, 2017). The idiomatic phrases are figurative and fixed phrases that the meaning cannot be solved out by recognizing each word, and they do not intend what they said (Fellbaum, 2017) and (Motallebzadeh & Tousi, 2011). The idiomatic phrases, also, can be defined as three-fold (Fernando, 1996). They are conventionalized multiword expressions; they are almost always non-literal; and they are inseparable units whose parts cannot be mixed or mixed only within acceptable limits.

The forms of idioms can be further classified into colloquialisms, proverbs, slangs, allusions, and phrasal verbs (Dastjerdi & Adelnia, 2011). Colloquialism or colloquial language is often considered as part of casual, popular, and even intimate language. They are not used for formal speech or writing. *Piece of cake*, for instance, is a colloquialism. Next, a proverb is a known sentence that contains a moral value, message, or wisdom. Proverbs are usually used to beautify expressions and to enhance the relationship and the language used among speakers. *Action speaks louder than words*, for example, is one of the popular English proverbs. The third is slang. Slangs refer to a highly informal language, sometimes taboo, vulgar, and profane, generally spoken by a particular group in a particular situation. Slang is considered a nonstandard use of language. *What's up?* and *What the hell?* are two popular slang expressions in English. The fourth is allusions. An allusion is a reference, generally related to a person, place, event, or thing that the readers/listeners are probably familiar with. Allusion will only be meaningful if the readers/listeners recognize the references conveyed. If the reference is unknown, the meaning will not be understood by the readers/listeners. The allusion of *the king on I'm listening to the king's song* will be meaningful if the readers know what it refers to. This refers to Elvis Presley. The last is phrasal verbs. A phrasal verb is a group of verbs and prepositions, verbs and adverbs, or a combination of them. Phrasal verbs have a different meaning from the original verb. *Look up* and *look after* are examples of English phrasal verbs. They cannot be understood word by word since they may cause different meanings. The BSL idiomatic phrase *awak sampayan*, for example, literally means *clothesline*, but idiomatically means *to deserve to wear any clothes*. Another BSL idiomatic phrase is *celi kékéncéng*; this literally means *pan handles*, but idiomatically implies *difficulties to understand anything*. *Kandel celi*, the last, this phrase literally means *thick ears*, but idiomatically implies *durable or resilient*.

It is highlighted that the phrases will remain preserved since the speakers are constantly exposing with. Therefore, this present work is aiming to discover in-depth information about (1) the form of idiomatic phrases in BSL; (2) the use of idiomatic phrases among BSL speakers; and (3) the efforts to preserve the idiomatic phrases of BSL. Lastly, the researchers hope this present study can serve as further information and understanding in collecting and preserving the BSL.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this present study was a case study. Case study intends to investigate a system or a single case through in-depth and detailed data collection (Creswell, 1998). It is a type of qualitative research approach that seeks to find meaning, investigate processes, and gain a deep understanding of individuals, groups, and situations (Emzir, 2011). In this current work, an exploratory case study was used to collect in-depth information and understanding towards the forms and uses of idiomatic phrases among BSL speakers in Pandeglang Regency, Banten Province, Indonesia.

The sources of data were native of BSL speakers in the southern area of Pandeglang Regency. There were 27 informants involved in this study. The criteria for informants were justified based on (1) place of birth, (2) age, and (3) address. The first criterion required that all informants were originally born in Pandeglang. Second, they were 30 to 60 years old. Lastly, they lived in Pandeglang area and were not urbanized for more than a month. All in all, they snowballed to 27 informants.

In this current work, the non-participant observation serves as an initial work to inspect the native of BSL speakers as required by the above criteria. Next, the unstructured interview was used to reveal the forms, uses, and efforts of BSL speakers to preserve the BSL idiomatic phrases. The documentation, meanwhile, was used to record the forms of idiomatic phrases including its literal and idiomatic meanings as transcribed from the interview sessions.

The observation and interview sessions were conducted five times. The first session involved seven informants with 39 data recorded. The researchers, then, explored a second data collection involving six informants and collected 24 data. The third data collection involved five informants with 10 data, and five informants with 18 data collected for the fourth data collection. In the fifth data collection, the study involved four informants with only three additional data. There were a total of 94 idiomatic phrases collected from the study. These works were conducted for about five months, starting from January to May 2021. The last, the data analysis technique used an analytical model (Miles & Huberman, 1994) which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusions drawing and verification.

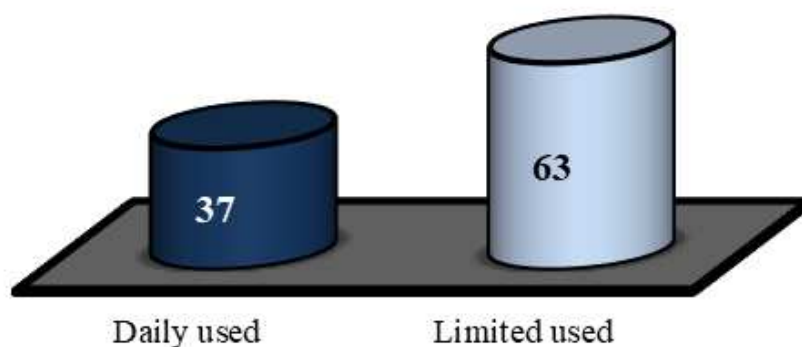
## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **BSL Idiomatic Phrases**

Referring to the interview sessions, the informants have listed 94 idiomatic phrases used in the BSL. While interviewing, documentations also emerged to record both literal and idiomatic meanings. All phrases are arranged alphabetically and listed as shown in the appendix below.

### **BSL Idiomatic Phrases and the Uses among Speakers**

The results of the interview, moreover, revealed that 10 informants (37%) confirmed the phrases were still used as part of daily speech. 17 informants (63%), however, conveyed the different views. They claimed that the phrases started to be limited in use among the speakers. Reflecting further investigation from these 17 informants, it discov-



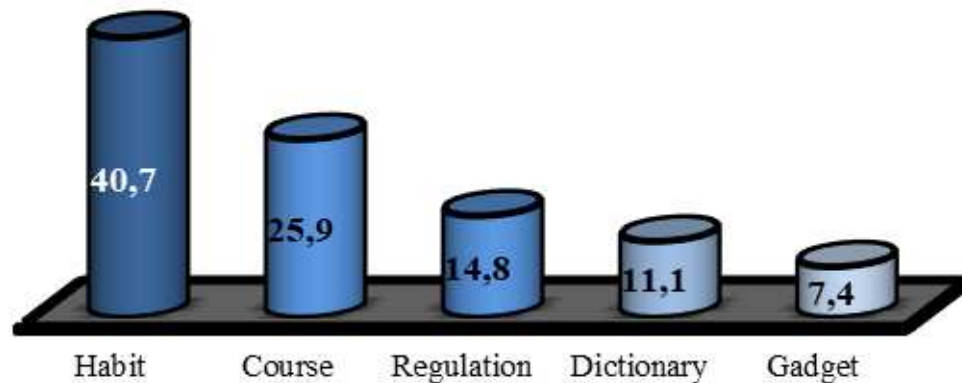
**Figure 1.** The Use of Idiomatic Phrases among BSL Speakers

ered that five informants (29.4%) believed that BSL has been locally shifted by national language, i.e. the Indonesian Language. Other 12 informants (70.6%) argued that BSL is no longer used by the parents at home as it serves as mother-tongue to their children.

The finding of 94 idiomatic phrases in BSL seems a huge collection for a local language. However, the facts show, as the interview session revealed, most of the informants (63%) confess that the phrases started to be rarely used among the speakers; only 10 informants (37%) who still use the phrases. This highly indicates that the use of the phrase is decreasing for both the number of speakers and the frequency of speeches. This is also strengthened as further investigations show that there are five informants (29.4%) believed that BSL has been locally shifted by national language, i.e. the Indonesian Language; other 12 informants (70.6%) argued that BSL is no longer used by the parents at home as it serves as mother-tongue to their children. This fact cannot be undervalued. It is possible the phrases will be extinct from the BSL vocabularies for the next couple years. The real works, therefore, in preserving the phrases have emerged.

### **BSL Idiomatic Phrases and the Preservation among Speakers**

Both interview and documentation sessions were also maintained to discover the informant ideas (and suggestion, as well) in preserving the BSL idiomatic phrases. There are five ideas delivered by the informants related to the issue. First, 11 informants (40.7%) conveyed the importance of habits to use the language in daily speech; this also serves as a colloquial language. This is not limited to using the language at home, but also in the community and official institutions such as schools and government offices. Second, it was suggested to implement BSL as a compulsory subject or course and being part of intra-curricular activities at both primary and secondary schools; there were seven informants (25.9%) who proposed this idea. Other informants encourage the issuance of regulations of both central and local governments regarding the rules to use BSL among speakers in Pandeglang Regency; this was issued by four informants (14.8%). The next was suggested by three informants (11.1%) who expected a dictionary or other printed documents entailing the BSL. Particularly, they expected a dictionary with comprehensive vocabularies, phrases, and examples of how to use them in sentences. The last idea was conveyed by two informants (7.4%). They proposed controlling the use of gadgets, especially smartphones, to the children. They considered that the manual or instructions used on the devices are commonly using Indonesian Language and English. Therefore, they assumed that the children would only be exposed to these two languages better than the BSL.



**Figure 2.** The Ideas in Preserving BSL Idiomatic Phrases

The importance of habits to use the local language in daily speech is unquestionable. Some previous works had supported the issue, such as (Dhanawaty et al., 2020); (Haerudin, 2018); (Indriati, 2014); and (Knauer et al., 2020). They had confirmed the issue regarding the importance of preserving local language through family and society involvement. They also proved that the parents are the key factors in preserving the local language served as the first language/mother tongue.

Regarding the second idea, the way to make BSL as a compulsory subject seems to have not been done so far. The language is only limited as an additional subject for elementary schools. The local government of Pandeglang Regency does not seem to have initiated this yet; whereas the importance of the issue had been investigated by the previous works, such as (Gumilar, 2016); (Kolobe & Matsoso, 2020); (Kurniasih, 2016); (Kurniasih et al., 2017); (Murtiningsih & Puspawati, 2020); (Musaddat & Lasmawan, 2020); and (Young, 2019). Therefore, it is expected to be taken into consideration for related parties to allocate the local languages as a part of the curriculum and intra-curricular activities for both schools and universities.

The third idea refers to the regulations that require Pandeglang people to use the BSL. Unfortunately, such regulation has not been made by both local and central governments. The present regulation only rules the use of the national language, i.e. Indonesian Language, as mandated by Act Number 24, 2009. This recommendation can be taken into consideration for the Pandeglang Government in preserving the BSL as part of their local wisdom. This is not instant work. Many influential factors should be considered as had been previously confirmed by the studies from (Ibrahim & Mayani, 2018); (Mulyawan, 2021); (Sari et al., 2020); (Suwarno, 2017); and (Yamin et al., 2020). The results of their works support the importance of regulations in governing the use of local languages issued by the local government. In the meantime, the research from (Suwarno, 2017) and (Yamin et al., 2020) show unsatisfying results towards the issue. They proved that limited resources and control from the government act as the barriers in implementing such regulations.

The publications of dictionaries, literatures, and other printed materials of BSL are also suggested by the informants. There are three informants (11.1%) who proposed this issue. Discussing the importance of dictionaries or other written materials in preserving a language is unavoidable. The facts show that many languages have been extinct, especially local languages, due to the lack of documents and other printed evidence. The lack of such evidence is the leading cause of language extinction. Although the BSL dictionary had been published by the Culture and Tourism Office of Banten Province in 2015, the

lexemes and phrases are still limited. Therefore, the related parties from both Pandeglang and Banten Governments need to publish a BSL dictionary equipped with the comprehensive vocabularies, phrases, and the examples of how to use them in sentences. The importance of the issue had also been proven by several previous works. The research results from (David et al., 2009); (Husna, 2018); and (McLellan & Jones, 2015) pointed out the importance of dictionaries and other written materials in preserving a language, i.e. a local language in particular.

The last idea is conveyed by two informants (7.4%) who propose the limitation to use smartphones and other similar gadgets among the children. They view that the manual and the instructions used on the devices are primarily using both Indonesian Language and English. They assume that the children will only expose and acquire more familiarity with these two languages than their BSL, parental control and advisory is required, thus. The previous studies conducted by (Alhawiti, 2015); (Alsied, 2019); (Fansury et al., 2020); (Kurniawan, 2018); (Nariyati et al., 2020); and (Yudhiantara & Saehu, 2017) proved that smartphones and other technological devices serve a massive role in acquiring and learning a language. This seems a contrast considering those studies suggest that gadgets may function to promote a language. Nevertheless, their works are only directed for second and foreign language contexts. The result that proves the importance of technological media in preserving the local languages has been done by (Galla, 2016) for some local languages in the United States, Canada, and Australia. In Indonesia's local languages context, however, the issue seems to have not been further studied.

## CONCLUSION

The result of this present work discovers 94 idiomatic phrases in BSL. These phrases are resulted from the interview and documentation with 27 informants of BSL natives as they initially inspect through observation. Further investigation also reveals that 10 informants (37%) confirm the phrases are still used as part of colloquial speech. 17 informants (63%), on the contrary, claimed that the phrases started to be rarely used among the speakers as they believe that the BSL has been locally shifted by the Indonesian Language and it is no longer used by the parents at home as mother-tongue. As this concern, five recommendations are issued by the informants: (1) using the BSL as colloquial language; (2) applying the BSL as a compulsory course at both primary and secondary schools; (3) committing the rules to use the BSL among the speakers; (4) publishing the BSL dictionary and other printed materials; and (5) limiting the use of gadgets, smartphones, and other technological media for the children.

94 idiomatic phrases resulting from this current work may not represent all entries of the BSL. Therefore, these findings may recommend the next study regarding the importance of the issue by considering various locus and informants. Further studies are also recommended especially in investigating the role and impact of technology on local languages in Indonesia. It seems that such studies have not been widely discussed. The researchers also encourage further practical studies on research and development which aim to develop programs or applications to collect and preserve local languages in Indonesia.

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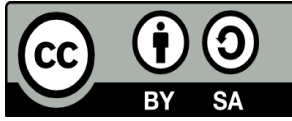
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